

Study Guide

for the

2021 National English Olympiad

A joint project of the
South African Council for English Education
and the Grahamstown Foundation

Compiled by
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for the
SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR ENGLISH EDUCATION
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National English Olympiad is a joint project of the South African Council for English Education and the Grahamstown Foundation.

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The 2021 National English Olympiad is based upon the anthology

This is My Story...

People and Personas:

a collection of first-person narratives

compiled by Yvette Morgan

1. THE AIMS AND PURPOSE OF THE ENGLISH OLYMPIAD

The English Olympiad aims to enrich young people through the study of English, while at the same time encouraging learners to explore the English language and its literature beyond the scope of the school curriculum. By providing learners with an opportunity to prepare themselves through self-study and self-motivation, the English Olympiad encourages learners –

- to take responsibility for their own learning;
- to be empowered through the rigours of academic writing;
- to think critically and creatively;
- to see the relevance of what they study – to themselves and to the world around them;
- to question their assumptions and to explore alternative ways of thinking and experiencing the world in which they live;
- to express those experiences in critically and creatively written responses to the English Olympiad examination questions; and
- to substantiate their opinions with close reference to the texts prescribed for the Olympiad.

2. EXAMINATION DATE & TIME

The examination date is Tuesday, 2 March 2021. Please note that this is a national examination, so no requests for alternative dates will be considered.

Schools may start the examinations at any time between 11:00 and 14:00 on the examination day, provided the candidates are allowed three hours to write, as well as an initial 30 minutes for reading time

3. RESULTS & CERTIFICATES

The top twelve Home Language (HL) candidates and the top three First Additional Language (FAL) candidates will be invited to attend the National Schools Festival free of charge in July 2021. The rank order of the Top 100 HL and the Top 20 FAL candidates will be announced during the official English Olympiad prize-giving ceremony during the Festival, and an alphabetical list of these results will then be posted on the English Olympiad website: <http://www.saenglisholympiad.org.za/>.

Certificates for all candidates who completed the examination will be posted to schools during the third term of 2021.

4. ASSESSMENT

4.1 Classification

Each candidate will receive a general classification of his/her script. Please note that it is not possible to provide detailed individual evaluations for every candidate. (See Section 4.2)

Scripts will be classified in the following categories:

- Diamond 90% +
- Gold 80 – 89%
- Silver 70 – 79%
- Bronze 60 – 69%
- Merit 50 – 59%
- Participation 0 – 49%
- Unclassified Did not complete the paper

Classification Criteria

Note: The following indicates of some of criteria used in the assessment of examination scripts. There are, however, many other factors pertaining to the content of answers and the use of language that will be taken into account by the examiners. (See Section 4.3.)

Diamond

Diamond candidates display exceptional academic skill, responding to questions with insight, maturity and imagination. Their writing is formal, avoiding slang, colloquialisms, unnecessary idiomatic expressions and contractions. They set themselves apart in their economical but appropriate and effective use of an extensive vocabulary. It is evident that they have engaged with the text/s thoroughly on many levels and that they are able to substantiate their arguments, quoting liberally, appropriately and correctly.

Gold

Gold candidates demonstrate considerable academic skill, responding to questions appropriately. Their writing is formal, avoiding colloquialisms, (including most idiomatic expressions and contractions) and slang. Their choice of words shows that they have an excellent vocabulary while, at the same time, they write economically and clearly. They also display a sense of having engaged with the text on many levels and are able to quote appropriately and correctly.

Silver

Silver classification denotes a high level of competence and the receivers of this award can be justly proud of themselves. They clearly understand the texts and the questions, they are able to use appropriate academic language, and they rarely use colloquialisms. They demonstrate a very good vocabulary and write with verve, accuracy and creativity. They write well-structured P.E.E. (Point, Evidence, Explain) paragraphs and will probably go on to do exceptionally well in their chosen fields at tertiary level.

Bronze

These candidates are competent writers of English, and have prepared thoroughly for the exam, but they might have slipped up occasionally, allowing the odd colloquialism or slang expression into their writing. They have good vocabularies and have provided generally acceptable responses to the examination questions, but perhaps without sufficient depth or detail.

Merit

The content of the work of these candidates shows that they have genuinely engaged with the texts. They might have enjoyed reading the anthology, they understand the texts and they know what they want to say, but they have not yet acquired the skills to put all their ideas across successfully. Their writing may be slightly undisciplined at times, but it is generally sound.

Participation

These candidates may have a point of view, but sometimes it is hidden in rote-learned phrases and their ideas are often not substantiated by reference to the text. They may have misinterpreted or failed to explore one or more of the questions that they have chosen to answer. Their writing often lacks discipline and possibly includes colloquial expressions and slang, and their vocabularies may be inadequate for academic purposes. These candidates should read more to cultivate the more formal style and extensive vocabulary that is required in high-level examinations and in the world of work.

Unclassified

Unclassified candidates have not completed the entire examination. These candidates are few and far between as most learners who sign up for the Olympiad prepare well and enjoy writing the examination and expressing their opinions.

4.2 Detailed Assessments

In the call for entries provision was made for a limited number of candidates to make special application for detailed comment on their scripts, at an additional fee, and subject to a maximum of two candidates per school. These assessments will be sent to the candidates via their schools after the results have been released.

Note: The English Olympiad is not an examination focused simply on results, and the marked scripts are never returned to candidates.

4.3 Examiners' Evaluation

Candidates are assessed in two broad areas:

Content

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Coherence | logical structuring of answers |
| Relevance | how the answer relates to the question |
| Insight | whether the answer shows maturity and understanding |
| Substantiation | whether statements and arguments are supported by textual reference |
| Creativity | originality and freshness of thought ('spark') |
| Critical thinking | whether the responses reflect the critical awareness associated with academic writing |

Style and Language

| | |
|----------|---|
| Accuracy | grammar, punctuation, spelling and paragraphing (importantly: whether or not these detract from the answer) |
| Style | conciseness and appropriate register for the format of the question |

ADVICE TO CANDIDATES

Your teachers will confirm that many candidates sitting for examinations fail to read the questions carefully. They may provide well-written answers – but to questions that have not been asked, or they answer only part of the question. You should therefore read each question very carefully, think about your possible response to the question, and – before starting to write – read the question again.

5. PRIZES AND AWARDS, 2021

All candidates (other than those whose scripts are 'Unclassified') will receive English Olympiad certificates which indicate the classification of their scripts.

The Top 3 candidates in the Home Language examination will receive the following cash prizes:

- 1st Prize R33 000
- 2nd Prize R30 000
- 3rd Prize R27 000

Those placed 4th to 20th in the Home Language examination and those placed in the Top 10 in the First Additional Language exam will also receive prizes.

The Top 12 candidates in the Home Language examination and the Top 3 in the First Additional Language examination will be invited to attend the National Schools Festival in July free of charge.

The Top 42 Home Language candidates and the Top 8 First Additional Language candidates will be offered free tuition scholarships for their first year of any programme of study at Rhodes University after the successful completion of their matriculation examinations, subject to their meeting the University's academic entry requirements.

6. THE SYLLABUS: TITLE AND THEME

The title of the 2021 English Olympiad is ***This is My Story***, and the theme is **People and Personas**. The focus is on character-driven first-person narratives. The Olympiad anthology comprises short stories, poems, a travelogue, a dramatic monologue and an extract from a novella.

7. PREPARATION FOR THE ENGLISH OLYMPIAD

Preparation should comprise self-study, as well as interaction with other candidates, especially in workshops or group sessions, to aid in coming to a clear understanding of texts and identifying sub-texts.

Candidates who want to do well in the Olympiad should study the anthology thoroughly. This study guide has been provided to assist in exploring and understanding important aspects of the texts. The Group Work questions should stimulate lively conversation and interaction regarding the anthology. Candidates should deal with the Individual Work questions by themselves, and may access a memo available from January 2021 on the English Olympiad website to check if their answers are on the right track. Candidates should also keep a list of words (and meanings) of which they were initially not sure.

Past candidates have said that in preparing for the Olympiad they learnt so much about themselves, thinking creatively, structuring ideas logically and engaging with literature in ways that they did not think that they could.

During workshops, individuals or groups could, for example,

- set essay questions for other groups to practice for Section A;
- write dialogues using various characters' voices;
- write dramatic monologues from different characters' perspectives;
- prepare letters from and to characters in the anthology using various scenarios upon which to base their letters.

Teachers need not feel that the Olympiad is yet another activity to add to their existing workloads. They are not expected to teach, but to facilitate workshops/group sessions and they may advise and provide stimulus for the groups, but candidates should be allowed to prepare themselves and each other.

8. THE EXAMINATIONS

The **English Home Language (HL)** and the **English First Additional Language (FAL)** examinations are written simultaneously, usually in the same venue at each school. (Note: Candidates may write the FAL examination only if they are registered at their school for English FAL.)

8.1 Rules

On the examination day candidates must observe the following examination rules which your invigilators will be required to enforce:

- a) You may bring the following into the examination venue:
 - pens, pencils, rulers, erasers
 - your copy of the anthology *This is My Story*
 - your dictionary.
- b) You may **not** bring this Study Guide into the exam venue.
- c) You may not bring any other papers, documents, notes, cell phones or digital retrieval devices into the examination venue.

NB: *You may only underline, highlight and place labels or markers on the text in the anthology or in your dictionary. You must not make any other notes or annotations of any kind in the anthology, or in the dictionary that you take into the exam venue. If your school cannot supply you with a dictionary, you may bring your own.*

8.2 The Examination Paper

SECTION A will be the literature essay section. The recommended length of your essay is 450-500 words. It will be a formal essay that requires an introduction and a conclusion, sensible paragraphing and substantiation from the texts for the ideas presented. (50 Marks)

SECTION B will require you to compose a creative and/or transactional writing piece (30 marks). The recommended length will be about 200 words. The kinds of composition that you may typically expect are: letters, poems, emails, dialogues, diary entries, newspaper reports and reviews. (30 marks)

SECTION C will require an imaginative piece of writing based upon the texts in the anthology. (20 marks)

(See previous papers at <http://www.saenglisholympiad.org.za/> to give you an idea of the kinds of questions you can expect in Sections A and B.)

9. HOW TO WRITE A LITERATURE ESSAY

A literature essay is a formal piece of academic writing. To write a strong literature essay, you should consider the following:

9.1 Language and Conventions – a few pointers

- Always refer to a text (for example a poem, play, short story) in the present tense. Written words can never be considered ‘dead’ or ‘past tense’ because every time one reads the words they become ‘alive’ and the story ‘happens’ at that moment in one’s mind.
- Do not use clichés, slang or colloquialisms. This kind of language only really belongs in dialogues or in the direct speech of characters in narratives.
- Do not use contractions, as they are too informal for writing of this kind.
- Avoid second person pronouns (you and your). Using them seems as though you are ‘preaching’ to your reader, and again, they are too informal.
- Titles of texts must be written as they appear and underlined, not in quotation marks (except in the case of poems).
- Make sure that you spell characters’ and authors’/poets’ names correctly.
- Make use of connectors or signposting (eg: firstly, furthermore, in addition, in conclusion, etc.) to add structure and improve the flow of your essay.

- Introduce quotes. Do not insert them randomly, even though they are relevant. Ways to introduce quotes include:
 We can see this when he says, '...'
 This shows in her words, '...'
 When Noni says, '...' it shows that...
 Lettie is a seemingly sweet character with 'a mean hidden side.'
 The narrator reveals that 'he had eaten everything.'

9.2 Structure

a) Introduction

- A basic introduction should include a restructuring of the (main) essay question, so that it reads like a statement, including the title of the text as well as the writer's full names.

b) Body

- This will consist of about three to five paragraphs. Each paragraph should contain only one key idea.
- To structure your paragraphs, you may want to use the PEE (Point, Evidence, Explanation) or MEAL (Main idea, Evidence, Analysis, Lead out/Link) methods.
- Essentially, for both these methods, this means: Open your paragraph with your Point/Main idea, and then provide Evidence from the text (a quotation OR a specific example). Explaining or Analysing means that you give your insight and say why you wrote your main idea/point. Leading out/Linking means referring to your next point. Be careful, when leading out/linking, not to 'give away' too much of your next paragraph. Leading out/linking is not required in structuring a paragraph, and only the more experienced candidates may feel comfortable to do this.
- Use signposting/connecters (as mentioned) to help your essay to flow from one paragraph to the next.

3) Conclusion

- This is basically a summary of the main points of your essay.
- There should be no new information in a conclusion.

NOTE: If you have never used this approach to writing discursive essays before, you should practice, using questions from old school or Olympiad exam papers. A carefully structured essay tends to be more coherent and easier to read than one that comprises a sequence of random and unrelated ideas – but be careful not to adopt a mechanical approach to structuring an essay. With practice, you will begin to understand the logic to the structure.

10. HOW TO COMPILE A CHARACTER SKETCH

Compiling a character sketch will serve you well when you study for the Olympiad, or study your set works at school – or if you write your own stories. You may use the template below to compile a character sketch of the main character/s of each of the texts in the anthology. You may not be able to fill in all the details for all of the characters, but try to complete the template as fully as possible. If you are a writer, you could use the template to create a character for your story. Fill in all the details, so that you can develop depth in your character. Remember, when you use the template you should give reasons, substantiation or examples from the text.

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Name or nickname | Names are often carefully chosen by authors to show ethnicity, gender, or social class. If a name is mentioned, try to decide why it was chosen, what it means and what it indicates. | |
| Back story/ history | Characters or people do not just suddenly become who they are. Their personalities develop over years. Back stories might only be hinted at, especially in shorter texts, which are limited by word counts. | |
| Personality | <p>The personality of a character is often conveyed in what they say and do. In defining a character's personality, you may want to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Emotional state(s)➤ View(s) on life➤ Relationships with others➤ Tendencies➤ Likes/dislikes➤ Physical appearance➤ Level of education➤ What does the character want?➤ Religious beliefs | |
| The way the character/s talk | This can give away information like a character's social class, age, level of education and country/region of origin. | |
| How the character changes | Does the character show growth or regression? What leads to the change? | |

POETRY

Mommy by Mangaliso Koposani

Ms Koposani was a student of mine and she wrote this true account of her mother's passing when she was just 13 years old. (Yvette Morgan)

Group Work

1. If you'd like to share:
 - 1.1 Has anyone lost a parent or guardian?
 - 1.2 How did the event affect your life?
2. Does anyone in the group write poetry? If so:
 - 2.1 What do you generally write about?
 - 2.2 What inspires you to write a poem?
3. Does anyone have a favourite poem?
 - 3.1 What is your favourite poem about?
 - 3.2 Why do you like the poem so much?

Individual Work

1. Refer to lines 1 and 2. Describe the speaker's frame of mind.
2. Lines 3 and 4, 'Her heart still beating/ Lungs still breathing' are in contrasted to lines 6 and 7, 'eyes closed/ body still'.
What is the effect of this contrast?
3. Find examples of:
 - 3.1 oxymoron
 - 3.2 onomatopoeia
4. Lines 13 and 15 contain anaphora. Look up 'anaphora' and discuss the effectiveness of using this device in these lines.

Own Notes

POETRY

The Call by Gabeba Baderoon

Gabeba Baderoon is a South African poet and academic. The 2005 recipient of the Daimler Chrysler Award for South African Poetry, she lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa, and Pennsylvania, USA, and serves as Assistant Professor of Women's Studies and African and African American Studies at Pennsylvania State University. (Wikipedia)

Group Work

1. What are the consequences of moving alone to another country?
Brainstorm and try to come up with as many consequences as you can.
2. Make a list of possible reasons for your not wanting to return home for a visit.

Individual Work

1. Explain the effectiveness of the use of 'catches' in line 2.
2. Who makes the initial call?
3. How is the word 'impetus' (line 6) usually used?
4. Explain what happens in the first stanza.
5. Quote a line that suggests that the speaker has been living away from home for a while.
6. Re-read lines 17 to 20. The speaker is so certain that she will never return home or see her mother again. What is your opinion on this?
 - 7.1 What information does the speaker give her mother?
 - 7.2 What does she not tell her mother?
8. Why would the mother speak in 'a way flattened by what is not said'?
9. The mother tells her daughter to 'leave safely'. How is it different in meaning to 'travel safely'?
10. Do you sympathise with the mother or with the speaker? Give a reason for your answer.
11. Using the information that you have gathered from the poem and your answers above, draw a character sketch of the speaker.

Own Notes

POETRY

Autobiography by Nazim Hikmet

Nazim Hikmet was born in Turkey in 1902. He was a poet, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, director, memoirist and activist. He was arrested several times for his leftist political beliefs and spent most of his adult life in exile or prison. Hikmet used his writing to promote his beliefs, and his work was banned in many countries.

Group Work

1. If you have internet access, look up Hikmet's life history.
2. He stayed committed to his beliefs even though he was severely chastised for them. Do you think his commitment was foolish or commendable? Give reasons for your answers.
3. Is there anything that you feel so strongly about that you'd be willing to promote your beliefs even though you would face punishment?
4. What is left-wing ideology?

Individual Work

1. This poem details some of Hikmet's achievements, but they are not in chronological order. Make a timeline of these achievements.
2. The poem consists of contrasts. Make a list of these contrasts.
3. How would you describe Nazim Hikmet?

Own Notes

POETRY

When He Spoke to Me of Love by MA Mokhomo

This poem is translated from the original, which was written in Sesotho.

Group Work

- 1.1 Have you ever been worried that your boyfriend or girlfriend would suddenly change the way they feel about you?
- 1.2 What led you to feel that way?
- 1.3 Were your fears founded in truth or just in moments of paranoia?

Individual Work

1. Look at the first four lines. How would you explain the speaker's emotions?
2. Explain the imagery in line 5 and 6.
3. Identify the oxymoron found in line 8.
4. MA Mokhomo was a Sotho poet. In her poem, she speaks of a Sesotho marriage custom. Find out what you can about the custom of mahadi (also known as lobola in isiZulu, Swazi, isiXhosa, Lozi and Ndebele).
5. Quote words suggesting that the speaker sees her fiancé as a demi-god.
6. Reread lines 12 to 17. Would you say the speaker's actions are desperate or in keeping with her culture? Why?

Own Notes

TRAVELOGUE

New Horizons by Miriam Tlali

Miriam Tlali was a South African novelist, the first black woman in South Africa to publish an English-language novel, Muriel at Metropolitan, in 1975. She was also one of the first to write about Soweto. (Wikipedia)

This essay was written around the late 70s or early 80s when flying long distances meant changing planes a few times. In this story, we follow Tlali on her journey from Johannesburg to Chicago.

Group Work

1. Has anyone in the group travelled overseas?
 - 1.1 If someone has:
 - a) What did it feel like the first time you went overseas?
 - b) What did you expect from your travels?
 - c) What was your first long-haul flight like?
 - d) What advice would you give to someone who is going overseas for the first time?
 - 1.2 If no one has:
 - a) What do you think it must be like to go overseas for the first time?
 - b) What would you expect from your travels?
 - c) Would you talk to your fellow passengers? Why?
2. Define serendipity.
 - 2.1 Write down then share any serendipitous moments you have had in your life.

Individual Work

1. Using the template, draw a character sketch of the narrator.
- 2.1 Make a list of places where Tlali had to stop at before she reached her final destination.
3. Name the people with whom Tlali converses on her flights. Briefly state her interaction with each.
4. Tlali's writing style can be seen as both poetic and honest. Draw a table like the one below and write down quotations that support each aspect of her writing.

| Examples of Tlali's poetic approach | Examples of her honest/candid approach |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| • | • |
| • | • |

5. Tlali mentions a few serendipitous events. What are they?

SHORT STORIES

Legal Alien by Crystal Butungi Rutangye

Crystal Butungi Rutangye, the founder of Scribe House, a Ugandan-based publishing agency, is a publishing consultant who helps self-publishing authors and firms to produce and sell standard publications. She has vast experience in editing and proofreading both fiction and non-fiction works.

Group Work

- 1.1 Is there anyone in the group who cannot speak a language that their parents or grandparents speak? How so?
- 1.2 Does this make them feel like an outcast at family gatherings?
- 2.1 Has anyone changed schools – other than moving from primary to high school?
- 2.2 If there is someone who has changed schools, what were the most challenging aspects of moving to a new school?
- 2.3 If no one has changed schools, make a list of what you think might be the most difficult challenges of moving to a new school in a different country.
3. At the beginning of the story, the narrator calls the receptionist corrupt as she waives the narrator's consultation fee because they are from the same tribe. The narrator also pretends to understand the receptionist when she speaks to her in their vernacular. Do you think the narrator, herself, is corrupt in these actions, or is she justified?
4. Just for fun: If you have time and enough people in your group, perhaps you could use the above question as a topic for a short debate.

Individual Work

- 1.1 The narrator mentions things that are not present in her Ugandan classroom. What does this imply about her classroom in Australia?
- 1.2 Divide your page in half to make two columns. Label one column *Ugandan classroom* and the other *Australian classroom*. For each column, write a short description of the two classrooms.
2. What are the Ugandan students able to do better than their Australian counterparts?
3. Describe the narrator's dilemma or angst eighteen years after her first day in her new Ugandan school.
4. Briefly describe the unrest on the day that the narrator gets all her documentation together.
5. Why did the narrator's father decide to return to Uganda?

6. How does the narrator start to make friends at school?
7. Do you think the narrator benefitted from not spending her entire childhood in Australia? Give reasons for your answer.
8. Quote a clause that shows to which country the narrator feels most connected.

Own Notes

SHORT STORIES

Tune In Again Next Week by Carla Lever

A 2012 Business Arts South Africa (BASA) silver award winner for arts opinion writing, Carla Lever has written for several South African publications, including as editor of The Daily Maverick's First Thing bulletin and as a columnist for The Next 48 Hours. Her fiction writing has been recognised in national short story competitions – she was the winner of the 2014 SA Writers' College national competition, and runner up in the 2013 competition.

Group Work

1. What is your special skill – or do you have a unique 'party trick'?
- 2.1 We all daydream, and it's harmless until the daydreams become obsessive and people start believing that their daydreams are reality. What do you think of people who create and live out imaginary lives?
- 2.2 Why, according to you, do people create an imaginary second life for themselves? Make a mind map as this will be useful in understanding the main character of this story.

Extension: If you have internet access and an interest in psychology you may want to look up this topic of imaginary lives.

Individual Work

1. Look at the first six paragraphs. What does the speaker believe about himself?
2. Explain 'Store-All Stan's' radio call-in slot.
3. Do you think Stan has a healthy relationship with his mother? Give reasons for your answer.
4. What does Stan first notice about Sandy from Pleasant Springs?
5. Do you think that Stan goes too far with his interpretation of Sandy's words? Explain why and quote to support your answer.
6. What positive effects came out of Stan's 'interaction' with Sandy?
7. Explain the connection between 'garland' and the St Louis Subway.
8. Do you think that Sandy will walk through the doors of the 'grimy St Louis Subway'?

Own Notes

NOVELLA: Extract from *So Long a Letter*

Rejection by Mariama Bâ

Miriama Bâ was a Senegalese author and feminist, who wrote in French, which was later translated into English. Born in Dakar, she was raised a Muslim. At an early age she came to criticise what she perceived as inequalities between the sexes resulting from African traditions.

Glossary

- Baccalaureat: Sometimes shortened to Bac; a qualification similar to matric exemption, providing access to university study
- Mecca: A holy city In Saudi Arabia. The centre of the Islamic world, and a site to which all Muslims, who are able, are expected to make a pilgrimage at least once in their lives.
- Capital: In this context, an asset, or advantage of youth.

Group Work

- 1.1 What is polygamy?
- 1.2 How do you feel about a woman taking three husbands?
- 1.3 How do you feel about a man taking three wives?
- 1.4 If you feel differently about a man having a few wives compared to about a woman having a few husbands, why do you feel that way?
- 1.5 How would you feel if one of your parents or guardians married your best friend?
- 1.6 Imagine that you have been married for twenty-five years. Now imagine that your brother or sister-in-law and your local religious leader came to tell you that your spouse had married another person while you are still married to him/her. How would you react?

Individual Work

1. Why is Binetou compelled to get married?
2. Why would it be disadvantageous for Binetou to drop out of high school?
3. Compare the first visit of the three men with their second visit.
4. How are women treated in the society depicted in the story?
5. How does the speaker regain some self-respect at the end of the story?
6. Compile a character sketch of the speaker.

Own Notes

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NOTES

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(Not to be taken into the examination venue.)